BORIS VALLEJO

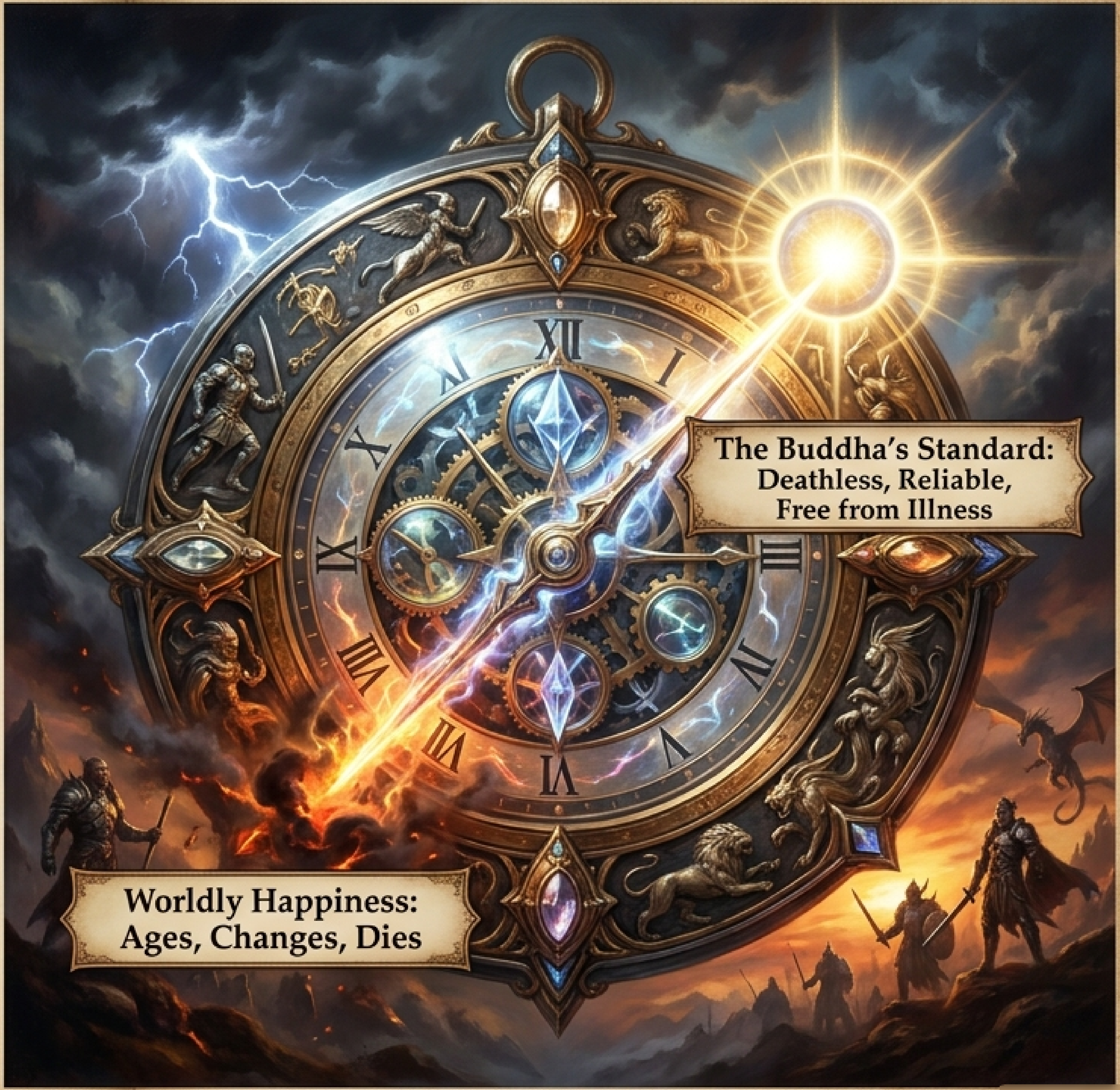
The High Standards of Lasting Happiness

Forging a deathless state of mind through the rigorous labor of meditation.

The search for happiness begins with an impossible standard

The Buddha’s pursuit was driven by a refusal to accept fleeting comfort.

If happiness relies on something that ages or changes, it cannot be claimed as reliable.


The Buddha’s Standard: Deathless, Reliable, Free from Illness
Worldly Happiness: Ages, Changes, Dies

The three perceptions function as a diagnostic tool for discernment

Ven. Ratthapala demonstrated that these concepts are not abstract philosophies, but direct reflections of our physical vulnerability. They cluster together to point us away from unreliable sources of joy.

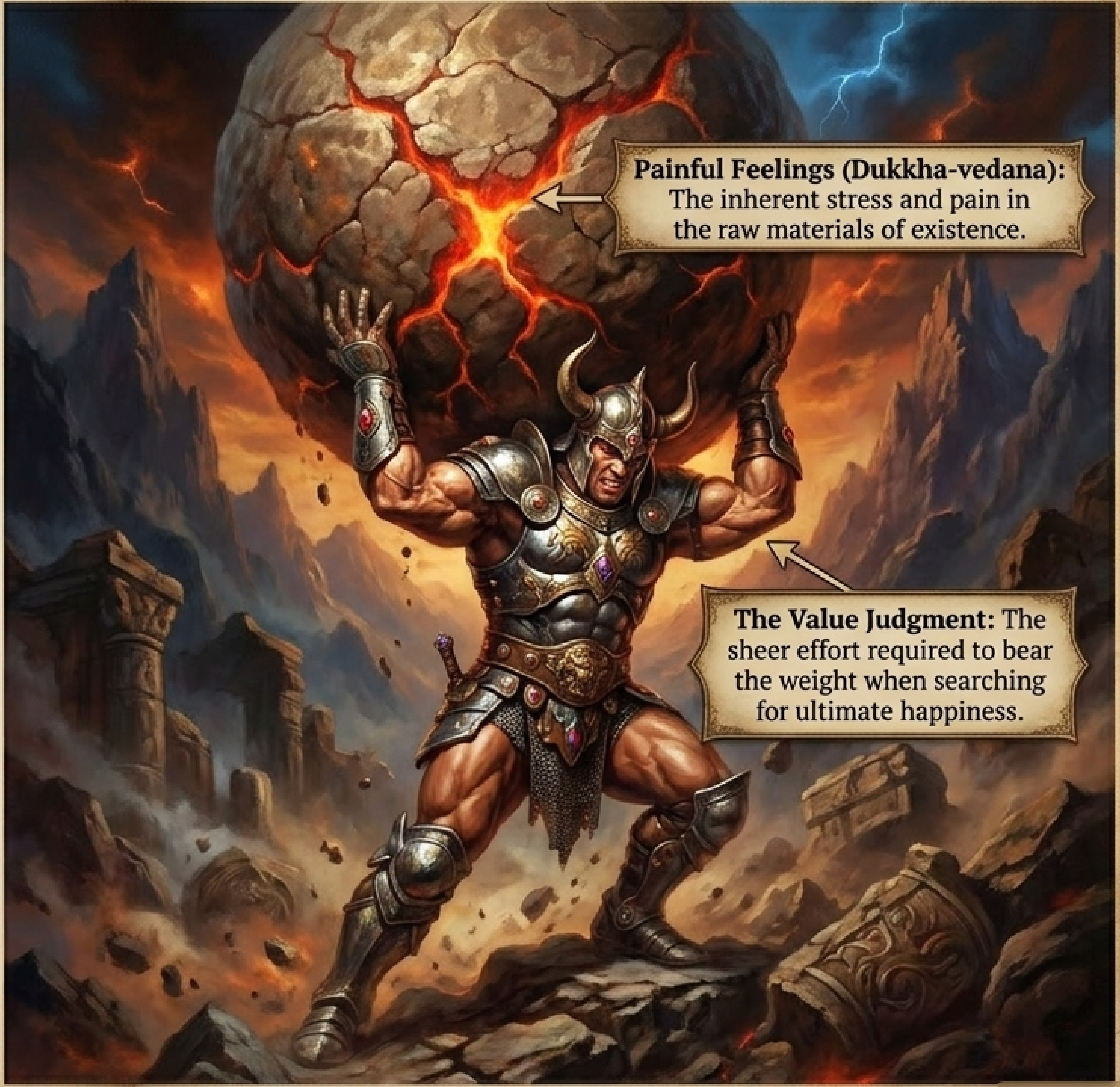
1. Inconstancy ➔ Aging
(Things change constantly)

2. Stress (Dukkha) ➔ Illness
(It holds pain)

3. Not-Self ➔ Death
(We cannot claim it as ours)

Dukkha is an active burden, not merely “unsatisfactory”

Translating dukkha merely as “unsatisfactory” is insufficient. Things are not inherently unsatisfactory unless we try to use them for an ultimate purpose and they fail. Dukkha refers to painful, unpleasant feelings—an active weight pressing down on the mind. It is a value judgment made by holding to the highest standards.

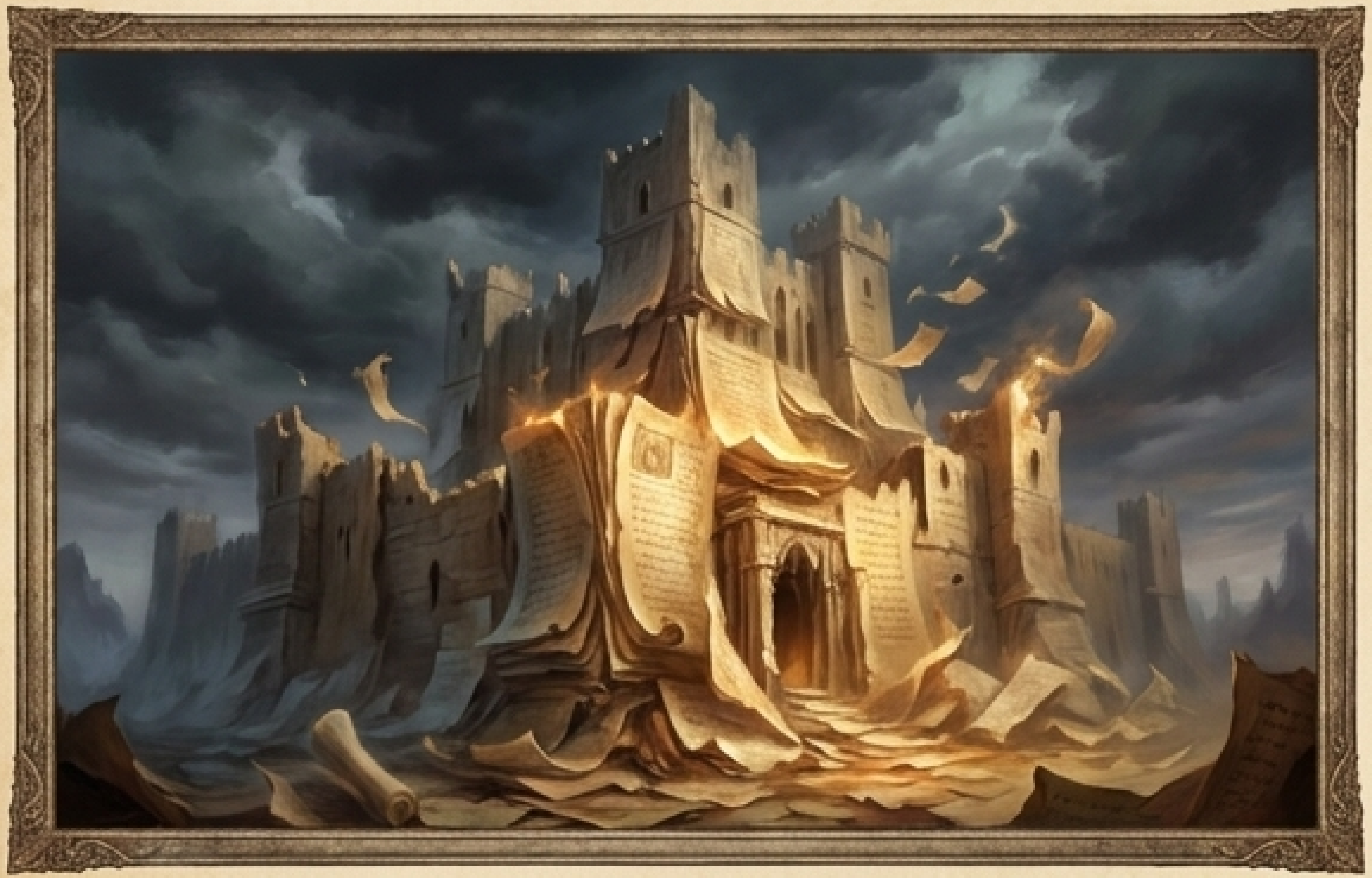


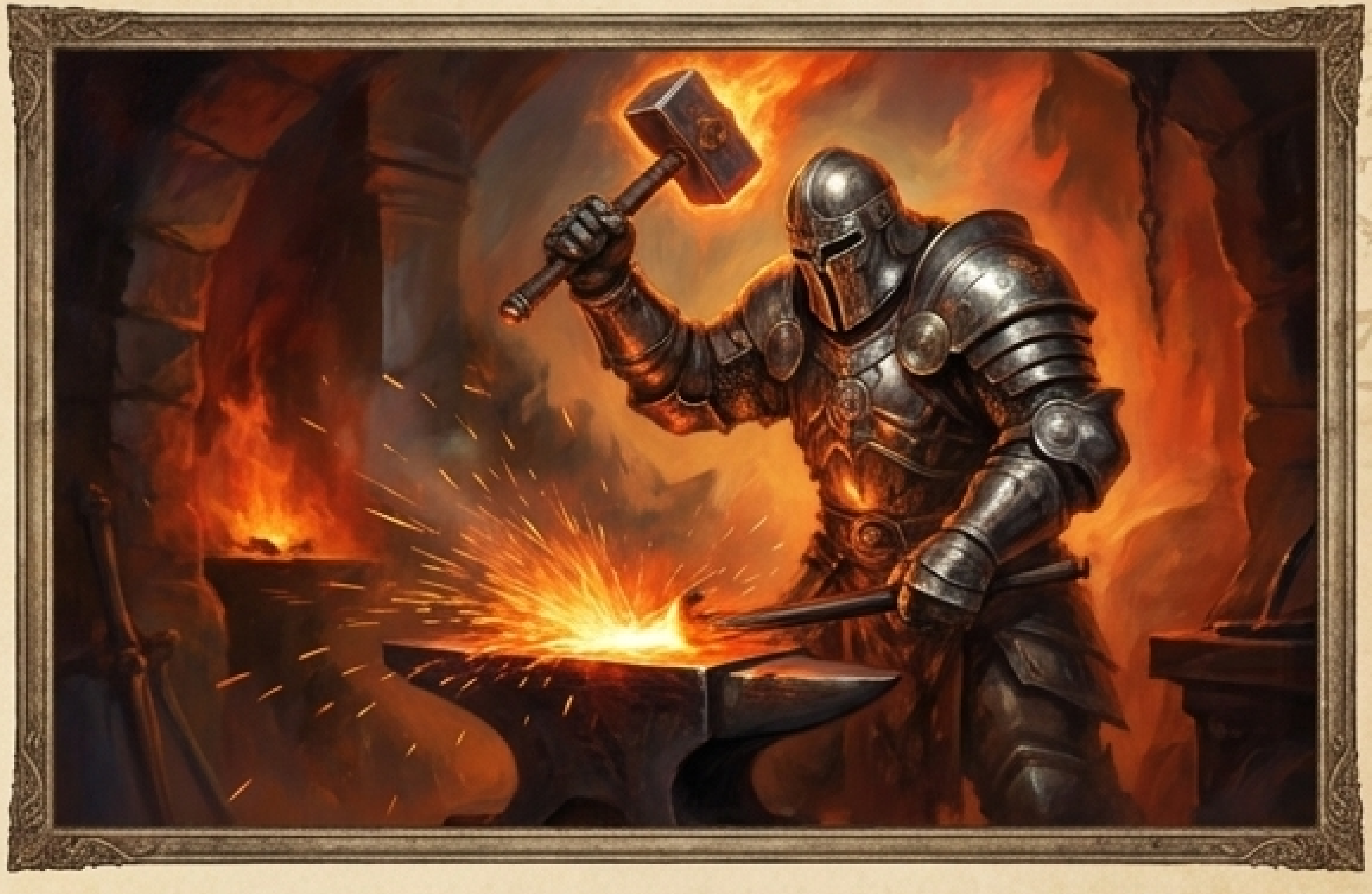
Painful Feelings (Dukkha-vedana): The inherent stress and pain in the raw materials of existence.

The Value Judgment: The sheer effort required to bear the weight when searching for ultimate happiness.

The Dual Blades of Stress: Materials vs. Craving

As you look inward, you encounter two distinct types of stress that must be addressed separately to achieve true stillness.





The Raw Materials (Stress in the 3 Perceptions)

Concept: The elements used to create well-being are inherently flawed.

Analogy: “Building a house out of paper.” You can make thick walls, but it will never last.

The Drive of the Builder (Stress in the 4 Noble Truths)

Concept: The relentless, craving mind that forces these materials together.

Analogy: The endless, exhausting desire to build the house in the first place.

The labor of concentration requires relentless refinement

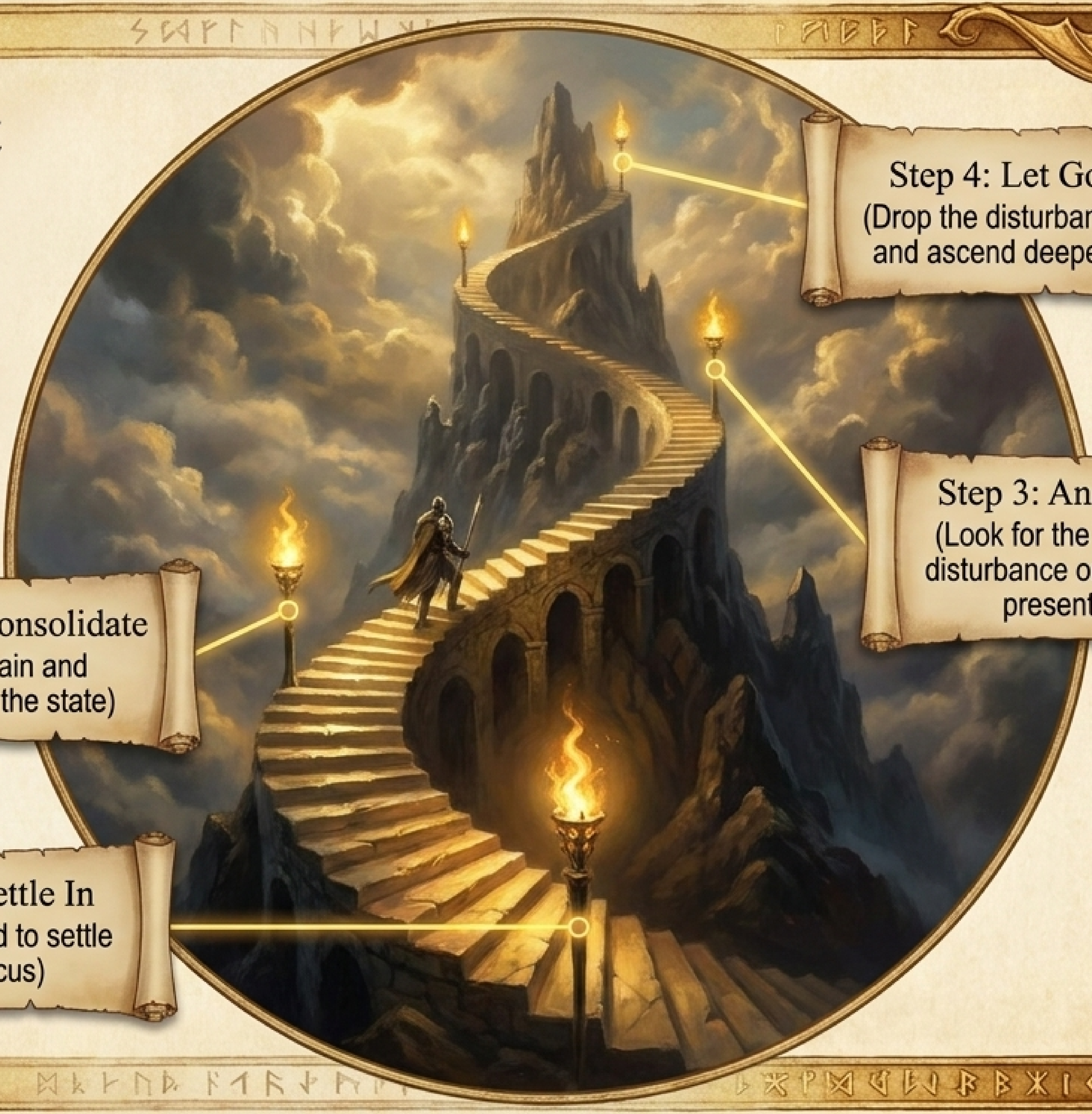
Deep states of concentration start as ordinary states that must be actively stitched together. Ajaan Lee calls this “concentration work”: directed thought and evaluation.

The Bathman’s Labor

Think of the bathman kneading soap powder and water all day. You must work the breath, evaluate it, adjust it, and spread comfortable energy through the body until it holds.

The Iterative Ascent of Mastery

When the breath is “good enough,” directed thought becomes a disturbance. You must drop the tools that got you there to enter the next peaceful state.



Step 1: Settle In
(Get the mind to settle on a focus)

Step 2: Consolidate
(Maintain and stabilize the state)

Step 3: Analyze
(Look for the subtle disturbance or stress present)

Step 4: Let Go
(Drop the disturbance and ascend deeper)

Earn the ascent by consolidating your ground

You cannot blindly run up and down the steps of practice. You must prove you have mastered your current state before looking for the next.

The Wise Cow

Like a wise, experienced cow, do not jump for what might be better. First consolidate what you have. Only when it is solid can you analyze it.

The Corporate Ladder

Like working a ladder, do not immediately ask how to reach the next position. Do your current job perfectly, so the mind naturally earns the promotion to deeper concentration.

Recognizing when the essential becomes a disturbance

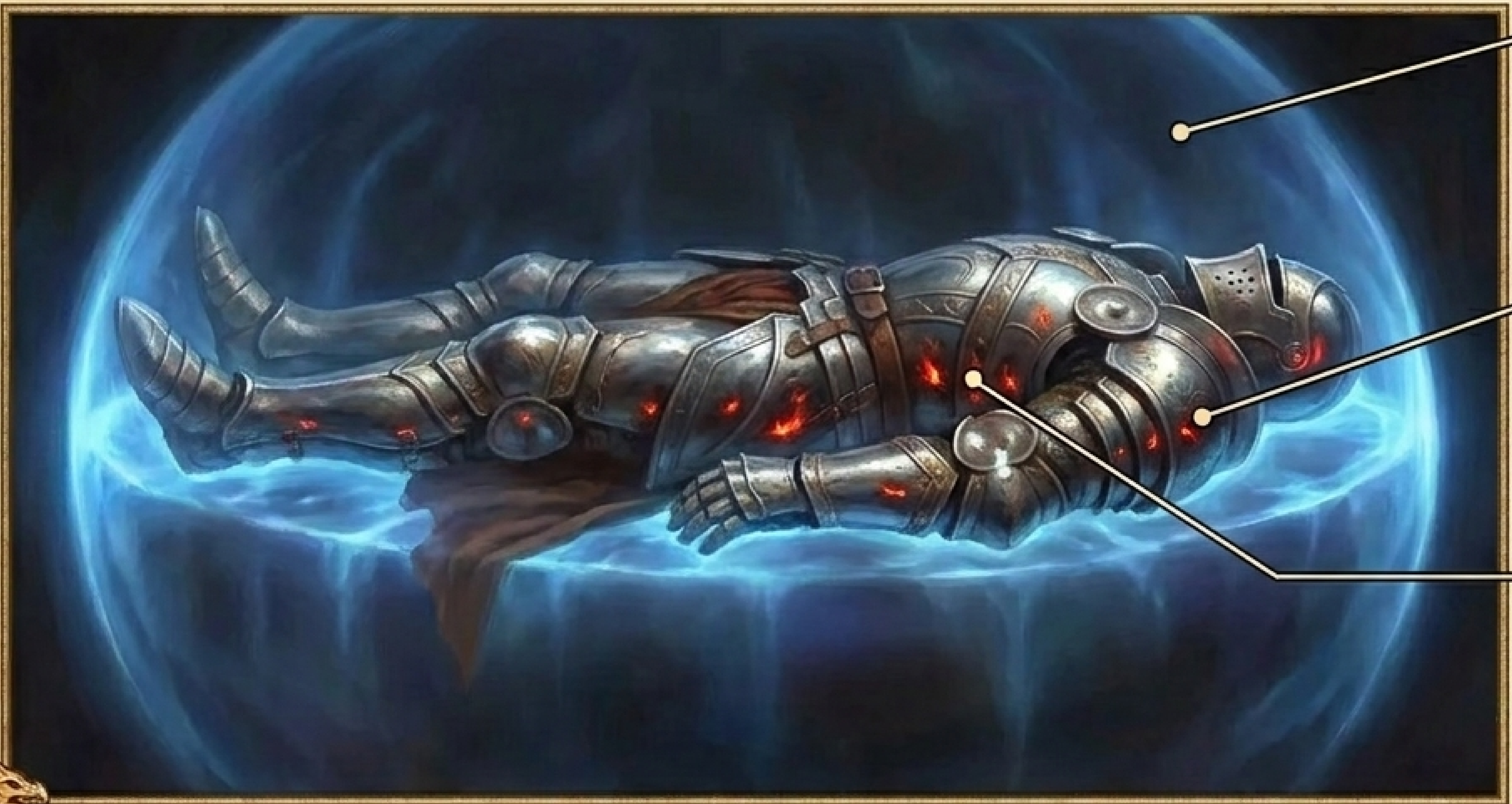
As you move layer by layer, even the act of breathing can eventually feel laborious. When the body's energy is entirely full, the process of breathing becomes superfluous.

The Metaphor: Like having your fill of water, and someone offers you three more glasses. It no longer refreshes; it only burdens.

The Action: Let the breath calm down. Drop the perception of the breath to find a stillness that no longer requires active energizing.

The Architecture of Letting Go: The Mattress Metaphor

You can smooth out your environment perfectly, but eventually, you must confront the friction created by your own presence.



1. **The Smooth Environment (The Mattress):** You remove every disturbance until the concentration is perfectly smooth, light, and comfortable.
2. **The Inherent Pain (The Body):** Even on a perfect surface, you realize you have a body. The body carries its own inherent pains.
3. **The Mind's Fabrication:** Even in subtle concentration, there is an "act of will." The mind is still fabricating a state, which feels burdensome.

Detecting the final acts of will through their instability

In the highest, formless levels of concentration, an act of will remains. You learn to detect it because of its inconstancy—an unevenness where the level of stress slightly rises and falls.

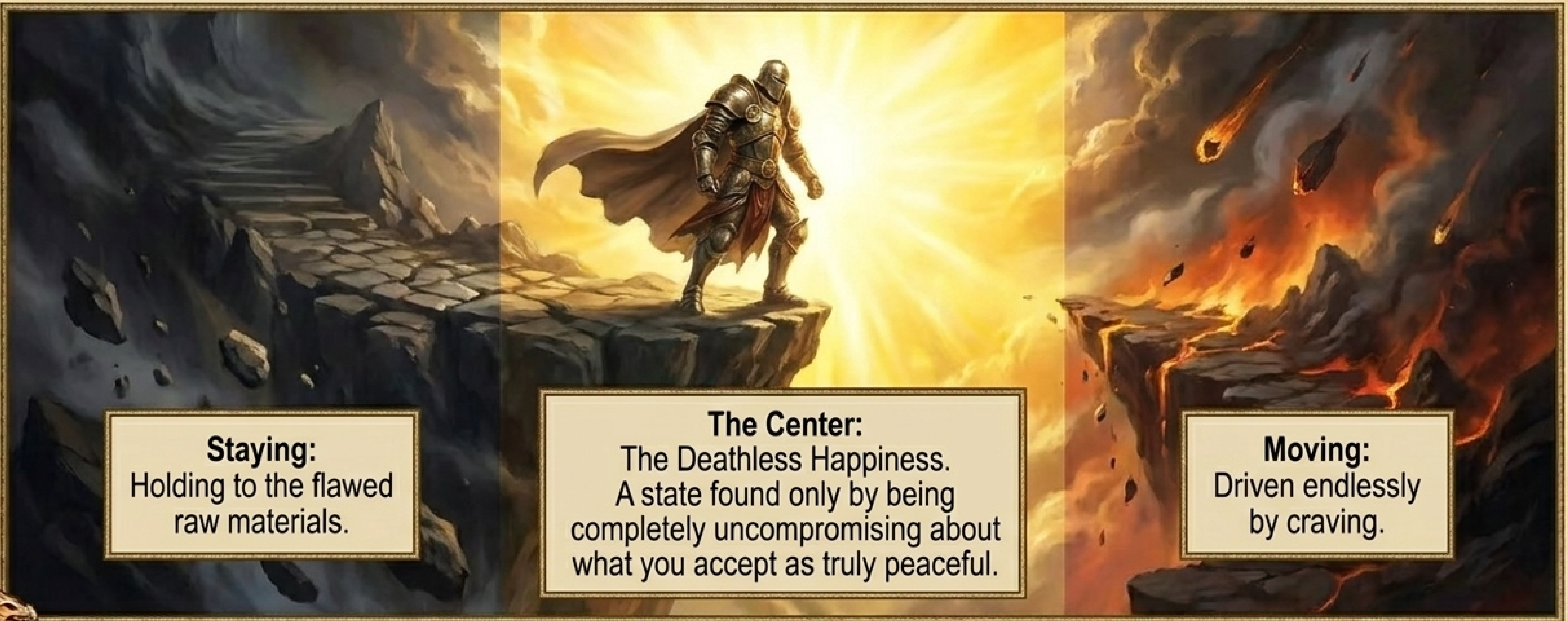
1. Detect the Shift: When stress goes up, what perception did the mind just hold onto?

2. Recognize the Flaw: See that this subtle holding is inherently stressful.

3. Subtract the Will: Let it go entirely.

The Alternative Beyond: The Ultimate Stillness

Eventually, you realize that staying where you are holds stress, and moving somewhere else holds stress. By refusing to compromise, the mind discovers an unexpected alternative.



Staying:
Holding to the flawed raw materials.

The Center:
The Deathless Happiness.
A state found only by being completely uncompromising about what you accept as truly peaceful.

Moving:
Driven endlessly by craving.